On 16th February, 1916, the Shipping Control Committee presented a report to the President of the Board of Trade, outlining the position with regard to British tonnage available for supplying the needs of this country, and urging the restriction of imports which could best be dispensed with as the only way in which our shipping would be enabled to cope with its task.

Shaping Control Committee's First Report

The report showed that out of 3,468 steamers of 1,600 tons gross and upwards, with a total tonnage of 15,441,000 tons, the number already requisitioned for war purposes, or trading in other parts of the world (not to and from the United Kingdom), was 1,894, with a tonnage of 8,373,000 tons. Thus, for carrying essential imports for the ordinary needs of the population there were only 1,574 vessels available, with a gross tonnage of 7,068,000 tons—less than half the British mercantile fleet. In this total of 1,574 were included those vessels that had been requisitioned by the Admiralty to bring wheat and sugar to Great Britain.

Figures were submitted to show that 10,328,000 tons gross of British shipping would be needed, after making allowance for the maximum amount of goods that might be carried in foreign vessels, to meet the import trade of the United Kingdom on the level of the first year of the War, and to furnish certain extra tonnage for which our allies France

and Italy were making urgent demands. Our available shipping fell short of this • by 3* million tons gross, representing the carrying capacity for 13 million tons' weight of imports in a year.

The maximum we could hope to obtain by the aid